

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 000924

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM AND EUR
DOD FOR OSD-P

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2015

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN BULGARIA: NEXT STEPS

REF: STATE 85324

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES PARDEW, FOR REASONS 1.4 (A) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: A negotiating team led by Ambassador Robert Loftis made substantial progress in concluding a supplemental SOFA with the GOB during talks in Sofia May 16-17. Amb. Loftis also presented the draft Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) and identified the military facilities of interest to the USG. While receptive, the GOB interagency delegation raised several concerns with the draft agreement and also proposed that it be expanded to include a much larger sphere of cooperation. The GOB will provide suggested revisions in 2-3 weeks and Amb. Loftis expected to have a new draft that addresses GOB concerns in 3-4 weeks. With Bulgaria's upcoming parliamentary elections on June 25, the formation of a new government and the August break, final consideration by the GOB will likely be delayed until September. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Deputy Defense Minister Ilko Dimitrov led the GOB delegation, which included Deputy CHOD LTG Atanas Zaprianov, Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Milkov and Deputy Interior Minister Boyko Kotsev. Dimitrov told Amb. Loftis that, while he understood the security benefits brought by an ongoing U.S. military presence in Bulgaria, the GOB needs to show more tangible benefits in order to win public support for the initiative. Dimitrov highlighted the following issues as areas of concern:

a. Financial Compensation) Amb. Loftis cited our worldwide policy against paying rent for use of military facilities. He also stressed the ancillary economic benefits of our facilities investments, procurements and employment.

b. Freedom to deploy U.S. Force from Bulgaria) Amb. Loftis called this issue critical and outlined the need for maximum flexibility on use of any forces stationed in Bulgaria.

c. Command and Control of the shared facilities) The Bulgarians were reassured that overall command of any facility would remain with the Bulgarian base commander, although specific areas/functions might be controlled by the American commander, and U.S. troops would be under American command and control.

d. Greater specificity on the facilities being requested) To avoid the need for future Parliamentary approvals, the Bulgarians asked that we identify all facilities we might want to use. Amb. Loftis promised language that would address this concern.

e. Limits on weaponry) specifically listing nuclear weapons and landmines as problematic - Amb. Loftis responded the NATO-Russia agreement prohibited nuclear weapons on the territory of new NATO members and said he would provide a future response on the landmine issue.

3. (C) Dimitrov also asked that the agreement address U.S. assistance for Bulgaria's military modernization needs. Amb. Loftis stressed that the DCA would not be a vehicle to address assistance requests and urged the GOB to view the mutual benefits to be brought by a U.S. military presence in Bulgaria.

4. (C) Comment: The Bulgarians will be motivated to resolve the outstanding issues, but clearly have their eye on upcoming elections and the need to defend any agreement before a possibly more hostile Parliament. In the SOFA, they will be most sensitive on issues inferring a loss of sovereignty. U.S. freedom to deploy from Bulgaria will likely be most problematic in the DCA discussions.

5. (U) This cable was cleared with Ambassador Robert Loftis.